

A Benefit For You

BEST CARE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

EAP NOTES



Family Mealtime: *Nourishing both Body and Soul*

Wow, summer is already over and the kids are back in school. Kids today lead independent lives often consisting of sports practice, clubs, homework, social events, part-time jobs and more. With all of this activity, how do you stay connected and make time for family? A standing reservation at the family dinner table is a good start. With less than one in three families regularly eating together, many families are missing out on the benefits of family mealtime.

Improve family communication by using mealtimes as a time to share ideas, thoughts, and feelings. It's also a time for family members to have a meaningful conversation or simply to catch up on what's new at work or school.

Enhance your child's social graces. Mealtime can be used as a time to teach children table manners, social skills, family values, and even basic cooking skills. Additionally, children that regularly eat with their family have better language skills and a broader vocabulary.

A more balanced and nutritious meal is often served when the family sits down together. In addition, a real sit-down meal often alleviates between meal snacking of high fat or sugar laden treats.

Turn off the TV during family mealtimes. It's difficult to promote family bonding when everyone is more interested in the television program than each other. According to the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 42% of dinners eaten at home involve TV watching, and overweight children consume 50% of dinners in front of the TV.

Although lack of time may be a challenge for most families, the benefits are truly rewarding. Start small, two or three times a week and work up to five, maybe even everyday. If dinner doesn't work, try breakfast or lunch. Remember to make family mealtime important to all family members. Ask for ideas, menu suggestions, and convenient days and times.

Keeping the family unit strong and connected is a vital part of overall wellness. If you would like more ideas on improving your family life, contact your Best Care EAP. To schedule a confidential appointment with a professional counselor, please call (402) 354-8000 or 800-666-8606.

Recipe for Pleasant Family Mealtimes

- ✓ Start with one busy family.
- ✓ Add a strong commitment to regular family mealtime.
- ✓ Blend in time for family discussion and planning.
- ✓ Sprinkle with compliments and pleasant conversation topics.

Yield: Strong family bonds and effective communication.

Source: Iowa State University Extension

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